

CLAIMS

1. A package for containing a product, the package comprising:
 - top and bottom opposing flexible chamber sheets sealed together in a selected chamber seal zone to define a watertight chamber portion that is capable of containing the product; and
 - a hollow frame circumscribing the chamber portion and adapted to support the chamber portion when the frame is inflated.
2. The package of claim 1 wherein the frame comprises top and bottom opposing flexible frame sheets sealed together at a selected frame outer seal zone proximate the perimeter of the frame and at a selected frame inner seal zone proximate the chamber portion.
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3. The package of claim 2 wherein:
 - a lid sheet comprises both the top frame sheet and the top chamber sheet;
 - a base sheet comprises both the bottom frame sheet and the bottom chamber sheet;
 - 15 and

the lid and base sheets extend continuously from the frame to the chamber portion.
4. The package of any of claims 2 and 3 wherein:
 - a lid sheet comprises both the top frame sheet and the top chamber sheet, wherein the lid sheet is formed from a lid web; and
 - 20 a base sheet comprises both the bottom frame sheet and the bottom chamber sheet, wherein the base sheet is formed from a base web.
5. The package of any of claims 3 and 4 wherein:
 - the lid sheet is sealed to the base sheet at both the frame outer seal zone and the frame inner seal zone; and
 - 25 the frame inner seal zone is coextensive with the chamber seal zone.
6. The package of any of claims 2 to 5 wherein the top and bottom frame sheets are heat sealed together at the frame outer seal zone.

7. The package of any of claims 2 to 5 wherein the top and bottom frame sheets are adhesively sealed together at the frame outer seal zone.
8. The package of any of claims 3 to 7 comprising a weakness line continuously extending between the frame inner seal zone and the chamber seal zone to allow 5 detachability of the chamber portion from the frame.
9. The package of any of claims 2 to 8 further comprising a tear-open slit, in the form of a continuous or discontinuous cut, created in an area of the juxtaposed lid and base sheets, isolated from the frame portion and adjacent to the chamber seal zone, said slit being almost perpendicular to the chamber seal.
10. The package of any preceding claim wherein the bottom chamber sheet is opaque.
11. The package of any preceding claim wherein the top and bottom chamber sheets each comprise one or more thermoplastic polymer materials.
12. The package of any preceding claim wherein the top and bottom chamber sheets each have an oxygen transmission rate of less than about 150 cubic centimeters (at 15 standard temperature and pressure) per square meter per day per 1 atmosphere of oxygen pressure differential measured at 0% relative humidity and 23°C.
13. The package of any preceding claim wherein the top and bottom frame sheets each have an oxygen transmission rate of less than about 150 cubic centimeters (at standard temperature and pressure) per square meter per day per 1 atmosphere of 20 oxygen pressure differential measured at 0% relative humidity and 23°C.
14. The package of any preceding claim further comprising a frame inflation passageway for inflating the frame.
15. The package of claim 14 wherein the frame inflation passageway comprises a one-way valve.
25. 16. The package of any preceding claim further comprising a chamber inflation passageway for introducing a modified atmosphere into the chamber portion.

17. The package of any preceding claim further comprising a modified atmosphere in the chamber portion.
18. The package of any preceding claim wherein the frame is inflated to a pressure above ambient pressure.
- 5 19. The package of any preceding claim wherein the frame is inflated to a gauge pressure of at least about 0.2 bar.
20. A packaged product comprising:
 - the package of any preceding claim; and
 - a product within the chamber portion.
- 10 21. The packaged product of claim 20 wherein the product is a food.
22. The packaged product of claim 20 wherein the product is a meat.
23. A process of packaging comprising:
 - providing a base web comprising a flexible sheet material;
 - placing a product on the base web;
 - 15 positioning over the product a lid web comprising a flexible sheet material;
 - sealing the lid web to the base web at a selected chamber seal zone to form a chamber portion enclosing the product; and
 - sealing the lid web to the base web at one or more selected frame seal zones to form a hollow frame circumscribing the chamber portion and adapted to support the
 - 20 chamber portion when the frame is inflated.
24. The process of claim 23 further comprising folding at least a portion of the base web over the product to form the lid web.
25. The process of any of claims 23 and 24 wherein at least one of the selected frame seal zones is coextensive with the selected chamber seal zone.
- 25 26. The process of any of claims 23 to 25 wherein the sealing of the lid web to the base web at the selected chamber seal zone forms a chamber portion enclosing a modified atmosphere within the chamber portion.

27. The process of any of claims 23 to 26 wherein the sealing of the lid web to the base web at one or more selected frame seal zones forms the hollow frame enclosing gas at a pressure above ambient pressure.
28. The process of any of claims 23 to 27 further comprising introducing a modified atmosphere into the chamber portion.
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29. The process of any of claims 23 to 28 further comprising inflating the hollow frame.
30. The process of any of claims 23 to 29 further comprising thermoforming at least a portion of the base web into a desired configuration before placing the product on the base web.
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31. The process of any of claims 23 to 30 further comprising thermoforming at least a portion of the lid web into a desired configuration before positioning it over the product.
32. The process of any of claims 23 to 31 further comprising at least partially unwinding a base web roll to provide the base web.
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33. The process of any of claims 23 to 32 further comprising at least partially unwinding a lid web roll to provide the lid web.
34. The process of any of claims 23 to 33 further comprising severing the base web to form a package base web portion and a remaining base web portion, wherein:
the hollow frame comprises the package base web portion; and
20 the remaining base web portion is outside of the package base web portion.
35. The process of any of claims 23 to 34 further comprising severing the lid web to form a package lid web portion and a remaining lid web portion, wherein:
the hollow frame comprises the package lid web portion; and
the remaining lid web portion is outside of the package lid web portion.
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36. The process of any of claims 23 to 35 wherein the sealing to form the chamber portion and the sealing to form the frame are performed simultaneously.